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14. ABSTRACT Based on an examination of “seam” frictions between USEUCOM and USCENTCOM in Operation Iraqi Freedom, USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM must create a strong liaison relationship, while the Siberian portion of USEUCOM east of 90 degrees should be ceded to USPACOM. Such changes would take into considered five possible conflict points: 1) border conflicts between China and Kazakhstan; 2) Sino-Russian tensions over Mongolia; 3) Amur and Ussuri River islands disputed by China and Russia; 4) the Korean Peninsula, especially border areas adjacent to China and Russia, and 5) the disputed Kurile islands between Japan and Russia. Historical examples of previous 19 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> century tensions in these areas suggest that there is a significant chance for a renewal of such conflicts in the future. Friction produced by the existence of the USCENTCOM-USPACOM and USEUCOM-USPACOM seams could inhibit a rapid and comprehensive U.S. response. To offset the largest number of threats, USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM should open liaison offices in Hawaii. Meanwhile, USEUCOM should cede Eastern Siberia east of 90 degrees to USPACOM's AOR. Such changes would be ordered by the President and a special Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI).					
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**Avoiding “Seam Wars” Along the USCENTCOM-USPACOM and  
USEUCOM-USPACOM Divides**

**By**

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**A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily  
endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**

**18 May 2004**

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## **Abstract**

Based on an examination of “seam” frictions between USEUCOM and USCENTCOM in Operation Iraqi Freedom, USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM must create a strong liaison relationship, while the Siberian portion of USEUCOM east of 90 degrees should be ceded to USPACOM. Such changes would take into considered five possible conflict points: 1) border conflicts between China and Kazakhstan; 2) Sino-Russian tensions over Mongolia; 3) Amur and Ussuri River islands disputed by China and Russia; 4) the Korean Peninsula, especially border areas adjacent to China and Russia, and 5) the disputed Kurile islands between Japan and Russia. Historical examples of previous 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century tensions in these areas suggest that there is a significant chance for a renewal of such conflicts in the future. Friction produced by the existence of the USCENTCOM-USPACOM and USEUCOM-USPACOM seams could inhibit a rapid and comprehensive U.S. response. To offset the largest number of threats, USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM should open liaison offices in Hawaii. Meanwhile, USEUCOM should cede Eastern Siberia east of 90 degrees to USPACOM’s AOR. Such changes would be ordered by the President and a special Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI).

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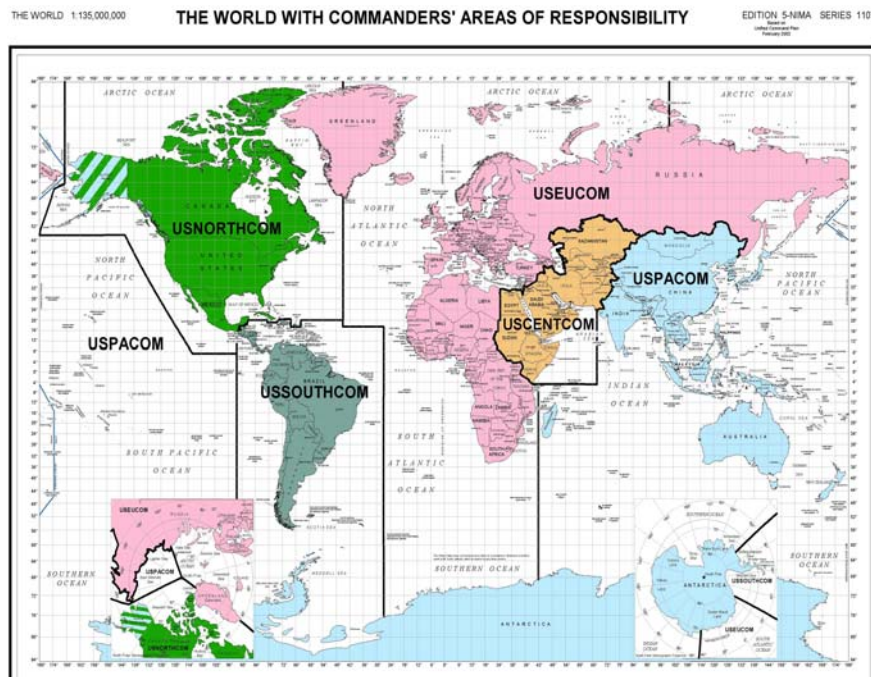
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## INTRODUCTION

-- “Use Barbarians to control Barbarians”

Although formally part of the USPACOM Area of Responsibility (AOR), the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is one of the only major countries in the world that touches on three U.S. combatant commands: USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM (see Map 1). In line with age-old Chinese diplomatic and strategic practices, such administrative divisions might allow PRC leaders either to play one combatant command against another or to take advantage of delays caused by the existence of “seam” frictions between the various combatant commands.



**Map 1: USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM AORs and China**

I will examine the problem of “seam” frictions on the boundary lines demarcating two or more U.S. combatant commands. Such seam frictions were graphically exhibited

during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) along the USEUCOM-USCENTCOM seam that runs between Turkey and Iraq. As shown during OIF, “seam” frictions between two adjoining combatant commands can inhibit communications necessary to guarantee the rapid and efficient movement of U.S. military personnel. Coordination of forces, logistics, and overall communications were all negatively impacted by the existence of this USEUCOM-USCENTCOM “seam.”

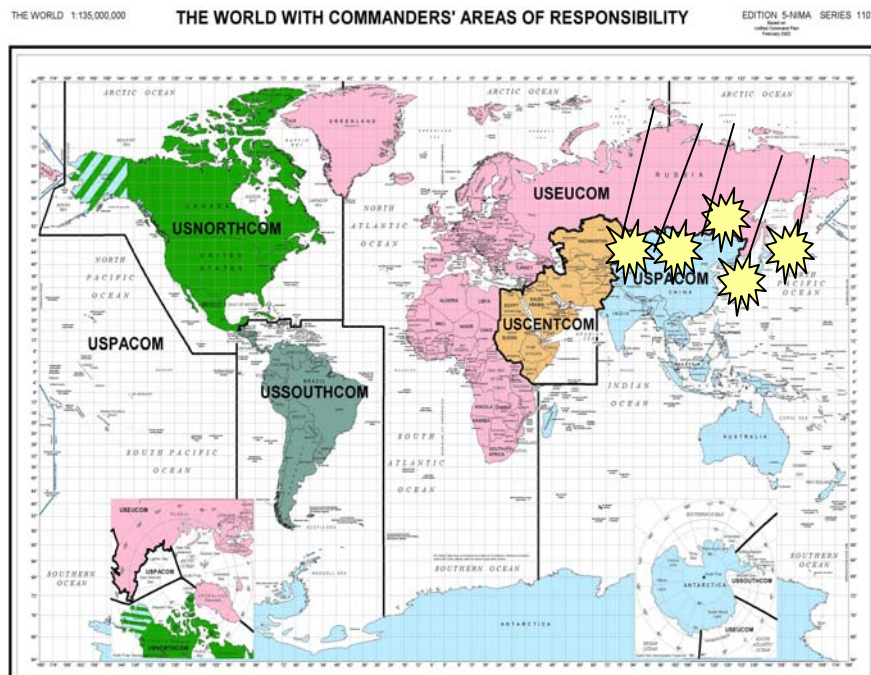
Other strategically important global regions where similar seam frictions might occur include the PRC, which unlike Iraq is surrounded not merely by two, but by a total of three combatant commands, namely USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM. Based on lessons learned from OIF, and from evaluating the history of Chinese border tensions, an analysis of possible seam frictions will be applied to the Central Asian and Eastern Siberian seams that run between USCENTCOM-USPACOM and USEUCOM-USPACOM, respectively.

Based on this examination, it will be clear that seam friction produced along the length of the USCENTCOM-USPACOM and USEUCOM-USPACOM boundaries could inhibit a rapid and comprehensive U.S. military response in five key regional conflicts: 1) Border problems between Kazakhstan and China; 2) Sino-Russian tensions over Mongolia; 3) Disputed islands in the Amur and Ussuri Rivers; 4) The Korean Peninsula, especially those border areas adjoining both China and Russia; and 5) The disputed Kurile islands between Japan and Russia.

This paper presents two operational recommendations that might alleviate future seam frictions in this region of the world. First, USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM should open liaison offices in Honolulu, Hawaii, well in advance of any future crisis to orchestrate their regional policies. This would be particularly important along the

borders of Kazakhstan, Russia, and the PRC. Second, to account for the majority of possible conflict areas along the USEUCOM-USPACOM seam, USEUCOM should cede most of Eastern Siberia east of 90 degrees to USPACOM's control (see Map 2). USEUCOM already has full control from South Africa to Siberia, so territorially it is over-extended. If there were an Asian conflict in Eastern Siberia, then any U.S. military assets would really have to come from USPACOM.

Given the specific geographic position of China with regard to the AORs of USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM, this paper recommends that 1) the President issue a National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) revising the *Unified Command Plan* (Appendix A), and 2) that a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) be issued explaining the reforms necessary to avoid potentially harmful “seam war” frictions between USCENTCOM-USPACOM and USEUCOM-USPACOM (Appendix B).



**Map 2: China's Five Major "Seam" Conflict Points**



## OIF AND THE EXISTENCE OF USEUCOM-USCENTCOM SEAM FRICTIONS

Recent U.S. experiences from OIF show how important a fuller understanding of seam frictions can be. In this case, USEUCOM-FWD, based in Ankara, was responsible for obtaining basing and transportation rights for U.S. forces on ships in the Mediterranean Sea to move to Northern Iraq, which was part of the USCENTCOM AOR (see Map 3). Once permission to transit by land was denied, then USEUCOM-FWD took charge of obtaining overflight permits from the Turkish government. Although the overall effort was successful, the command-and-control structures were not well defined, there were major redundancies of command, and the majority of liaison officers were not senior enough to coordinate joint efforts successfully. Only the many years of joint experience with Operation Northern Watch led to a close working relationship and cooperation between USEUCOM and USCENTCOM. Such prior experience might not be the case during other “seam wars” that happened to intersect the AORs of two or more less cooperative combatant commands.



**Map 3: Borders of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq**

Part of the problem in OIF was the rapidly changing campaign plan. Initially, it appeared certain that troops would cross Turkish territory and enter Northern Iraq by land. Later, once Turkey's parliament voted against this option, the new plan envisioned delivery of troops directly to Northern Iraq by air. The USEUCOM-USCENTCOM seam meant that "the structures put in place to delineate responsibilities and establish procedures for command and control were confusing and in some cases not clearly defined."<sup>1</sup>

Redundancy of effort proved to be a major problem. While the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) gave USCENTCOM responsibility for creating a concept of operations (CONOPs), the Unified Command Plan Implementation instructions were inadequate to define which combatant command was supporting and which was supported. This confusion inevitably led to redundancy, as USEUCOM-FWD in Ankara attempted to create plans that were even then being worked out in detail by USCENTCOM. Considering the chronic lack of manpower, this redundancy of effort wasted valuable resources.

During this period, the USEUCOM command-and-control experienced difficulties. For example, "Without detailed coordination to prevent redundant effort, many of these actions were also being done at CENTCOM."<sup>2</sup> Often, USCENTCOM matters were relayed up through the parent commands, rerouted sideways at a higher level from USCENTCOM to USEUCOM, and then sent down to USEUCOM.FWD. Obviously, this system not only took time, but the chances for mistakes increased the longer the messages had to be relayed.<sup>3</sup>

On 19 March 2003, the decision was made by the CJCS to give USCENTCOM all OPCON functions, and USEUCOM.FWD was redesignated as part of Task Force North (TFN). This administrative change immediately improved the routing of communications.

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<sup>1</sup> *Joint Lessons Learned: Operation Iraqi Freedom (Secret)*, US Joint Forces Command, Norfolk, VA, 1 March 2004, 11-51.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

After examining seam frictions during OIF, the tentative conclusions reached by the Joint Lessons Learned (JLL) study about this USEUCOM-USCENTCOM relationship was that: “A fundamental problem can arise when the organization charged with integrating military, diplomatic, information, and economic elements of national power on a daily basis is different from the organization charged with preparing a specific military option in an adjoining area.”<sup>4</sup>

Without a prior USEUCOM-USCENTCOM relationship established during the multi-year Operation Northern Watch, however, the number of potential problems might have been much worse. Therefore, in making recommendations about overcoming such “seam” frictions, the JLL’s report concluded that the operational structures were confusing and responsibilities were not clearly defined, there were many redundancies by the two staffs, liaison officers were not senior enough to get the job done, and finally the quality of the liaison officers was crucial.<sup>5</sup>

In conclusion, the OIF experience with seam frictions between USEUCOM and USCENTCOM led the JLL study to recommend that all such future joint actions that included two or more combatant commands must take seam frictions into account. To decrease the impact of such friction, all responsibilities had to be determined in writing in advance. Once this was done, then liaison officers should be picked that were of equal rank to the “supported command’s operation deputy.” Only liaison officers of high rank, warned the JLL’s report, could interact as equals with the supported command, which proved absolutely necessary to get the job done.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-52.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

## **FUTURE USCENTCOM-USPACOM, USEUCOM-USPACOM SEAM FRICTIONS**

The history of Central Asia, Eastern Siberia, and the Northwest Pacific are rife with border tensions and wars. Many of these have occurred along the present-day boundaries between USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM. The five that will be investigated here include: 1) border conflicts between China and Kazakhstan near the Ili valley; 2) Sino-Russian tensions over Mongolia; 3) disputed islands in the Amur and Ussuri Rivers; 4) the Korean Peninsula, especially those border areas adjoining China and Russia, and 5) the disputed Kurile islands between Japan and Russia.

During the 1870s, the 1940s, and early 1950s, and again in the 1960s, border disputes, territorial incursions, and the creation of a Soviet “puppet state” in Xinjiang characterized the tug-of-war over Central Asia between Russia and China. During the 1870s, the so-called “Ili Crisis” broke out, as Tsarist Russia used on-going civil unrest in China as an excuse to invade and take control of Chinese territory.<sup>7</sup> Although open war was avoided, and Russian troops retreated, this was mainly due to the impact of ongoing Russo-Turkish tensions in the Western parts of the Russian empire.<sup>8</sup>

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, border tensions continued unbroken. Beginning in the 1930s, the USSR tried to assert control over Western China. In the post World War II period, and all the way up through until the mid-1950s, the USSR dominated the economic and to some degree the political affairs of Xinjiang.<sup>9</sup> Finally, during the 1960s, Sino-Soviet tensions over these border regions resulted in hundreds of small and large clashes between the two nations.

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<sup>7</sup> S.C.M. Paine, *Imperial Rivals: China, Russia, and their disputed frontier* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 120-125.

<sup>8</sup> Immanuel Hsu, *The Ili Crisis: A Study of Sino-Russian Diplomacy, 1871-1881* (New York: Oxford Press, 1965), 155.

<sup>9</sup> Allen Whiting and Sheng Shih-ts'ai, *Sinkiang: pawn or pivot?* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1958).

Although Kazakhstan is now an independent nation, the border problems have simply been put off to some future time. Should tensions once again erupt, USCENTCOM and USPACOM might be jointly responsible for assisting Kazakhstan, which is now considered to be a regional ally. In addition, should a U.S.-PRC conflict break out further to the East—such as in Taiwan Strait—then access to air bases in Kazakhstan might be particularly important to put additional pressure on China from the West. According to Shambaugh: “Many PLA analysts perceive this [US] presence as facilitating U.S. strategic encirclement of China (taken together with existing U.S. deployments in Northwest and Southeast Asia).”<sup>10</sup>

Outer Mongolia was officially recognized by the USSR in 1924 as an integral part of China, even though there had been frequent clashes in this region following the 1917 Bolshevik revolution. In fact, Outer Mongolia was a Soviet puppet state. In fall 1924 it declared itself to be the Mongolia People’s Republic (MPR), only the second communist government in the world after the USSR. As part of the 1945 Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, the Nationalist government granted Outer Mongolia its independence in return for Stalin’s promise not to aid the Chinese Communists.<sup>11</sup>

Mao Zedong secretly condemned the creation of a Soviet satellite state in Mongolia, but he had to accept it as a *fait accompli* during his 1950 negotiations with Stalin. Later, however, during the early 1960s, there were renewed tensions over both the exact location of the Sino-Mongolian border, and the status of the MPR as a Soviet satellite state.<sup>12</sup>

Following the 1991 Soviet collapse, Mongolia has been moving closer and closer to the PRC, especially in terms of commercial trade and economic dependence. Should China

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<sup>10</sup> David Shambaugh *Modernizing China’s Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospects* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 304.

<sup>11</sup> Bruce Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception: the secret history of Sino-Soviet diplomatic relations, 1917-1927* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 236-238.

<sup>12</sup> Constantine Pleshakov “Nikita Khrushchev and Sino-Soviet Relations,” Odd Arne Westad, *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 239.

retake Mongolia, “Russian defense needs in this region would triple.”<sup>13</sup> In the case of a Sino-Russian conflict over Mongolia, the responsibility for coordinating a U.S. response would be jointly shared by USEUCOM and USPACOM.

Since World War II, China and Russia have disputed ownership over a number of islands in the Amur and Ussuri Rivers. During 1969, in particular, such tensions resulted in outright war. Although the focus of the conflict remained small, fear of escalation—even including the fear of the first strike use of nuclear weapons—remained acute, leading Beijing to institute a massive enormous bomb-shelter building program.<sup>14</sup>

After 1991, China and the new Russian government negotiated new agreements that delineated much of their disputed border. However, several islands, especially adjacent to the river city of Kharbarovsk, remain in dispute; in effect, the two sides have agreed to disagree.<sup>15</sup> While the likelihood of a major war breaking out over these islands may now appear small, if tensions did increase the responsibility for an American response would be jointly shared by USEUCOM and USPACOM.

By far the greatest threat of “seam war” is on the Korean Peninsula. While Korea itself is part of USPACOM’s AOR, as is the PRC, Russia remains in the USEUCOM AOR. Such a divide almost guarantees friction—including communication and planning delays—should Russia become involved in any Korean conflict, either as a belligerent or an ally.

The impact of seam tensions should a conflict appear in Korea is particularly great because of the rapidity of events and the need for an almost instantaneous response by American forces in the Korean theater. Therefore, the USEUCOM-USPACOM seam

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<sup>13</sup> G. Tumurchuluun “Mongolia’s Foreign Policy Revisted: Relations with Russia and the PRC into the 1990s,” in Stephen Kotkin and Bruce Elleman, *Mongolia in the Twentieth Century: Landlocked Cosmopolitan* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 282.

<sup>14</sup> For more on this program, see <http://www.chinapage.com/friend/goh/beijing/underground/underground.html>.

<sup>15</sup> “Russia to Take Tough Stance on Disputed Border Island,” *China News Digest*, January 26, 2001, <http://www.hxwz.com/CND-Global/CND-Global.01-01-25.html>.

dividing North Korea and the PRC from the Eastern Siberian portion of the Russian Federation is perhaps the most dangerous scenario for a future “seam war.”

While a war over Etorofu, Kunashir, Shikotan and the Habomai islands remains unlikely, the diplomatic ramifications of resolving this territorial dispute are enormous. Since 1945, this dispute has been the main factor stopping Russia and Japan from signing a peace treaty ending the war. Tokyo’s view is that Russia “unlawfully occupies . . . integral parts of Japan’s territory.”<sup>16</sup> While a peace treaty might prove beneficial for Moscow and Tokyo, it would pose many problems for Washington, especially since the Kurile dispute has been a major factor behind Japan’s decision to renew periodically its security pact with the U.S.<sup>17</sup>

Should negotiations between Japan and Russia over these disputed territories be resumed, the seam dividing USEUCOM from USPACOM could inhibit possible diplomatic and military actions necessary for Washington to retain a favorable geo-strategic position vis-à-vis Russia and Japan. Knowing of this seam divide, and the probable friction it creates, Moscow and Tokyo might conceivably take advantage of such friction to increase their political leverage against each other, or possibly even against Washington.

The existence of administrative seams between USCENTCOM-USPACOM and USEUCOM-USPACOM could prove disadvantageous to U.S. policymakers and military leaders. The previous history of Asian conflicts reveal that such events were mainly focused on the modern-day borders of China with Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and Russia. Korea also represents a particularly dangerous “seam war” flash point. Finally, should the Russo-Japanese disputes over the southern Kurile Islands ever be settled, this might have an enormous impact on the continuation of the U.S.-Japan mutual security pact.

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<sup>16</sup> Japanese Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan: Response to a New Era 1996* (Tokyo, Japan: The Japan Times, Ltd., 1996), 40.

<sup>17</sup> Neil Renwick, *Japan's Alliance Politics and Defense Production* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

## HOW USEUCOM-USPACOM HAVE TRIED TO REDUCE SEAM FRICTIONS

While the USCENTCOM-USPACOM seam tensions are relatively small, the number of possible conflict points along the USEUCOM-USPACOM boundary are legion. The most important include Sino-Russian tensions over Mongolia and the possibility of war with North Korea, which borders on both China and Russia. The existence of seam frictions between USEUCOM and USPACOM could significantly impact U.S. response to such contingencies. How have the USEUCOM and USPACOM staffs coordinated their efforts to respond to such a possibility? Are these efforts sufficient to resolve adequately the possibility of future seam tensions, as shown by similar USEUCOM-USCENTCOM tensions in OIF?

Understanding that possible seam frictions might inhibit a proper or rapid response to a future conflict along the USEUCOM-USPACOM seam, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed outlining the various responsibilities of the two combatant commands. Most importantly, it was determined that east of 100 degrees longitude, USPACOM would be responsible for “noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO), conducts counter-terrorist (CT) planning for all diplomatic missions, and has force protection responsibilities in those areas of the Russian Federation east of 100 degree E. longitude.”<sup>18</sup> Additionally, USPACOM was given responsibility for “Foreign Humanitarian Assistance (FHA); Consequence Management (CM); Counter Narcotics; Personnel Recovery (PR); Strike Planning and Special Programs.”<sup>19</sup>

The most important single responsibility under discussion is operations planning, and in particular strike planning and special programs. In section 11a, strike planning is defined

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<sup>18</sup> *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Between the Commander, U.S. European Command, and the Commander, U.S. Pacific Command for Mutual Support and Cooperation*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.



as including “doctrinal and procedural matters pertaining to tactical air support, TLAM target planning and CSAR coordination.”<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, special programs are defined as “special category (SPECAT) programs and contingency planning for code-word plans.”<sup>21</sup>

With regard to security cooperation activities with Russia, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed regarding activities with the Russian Federation. Most importantly, for “all TSC planning and coordination with the Russian Federation, USEUCOM is the ‘supported’ command and USPACOM is the ‘supporting’ command.”<sup>22</sup> When conducting events relating to the US-Russia Military Contact Plan (MCP), however, “USPACOM’s list will primarily consist of those proposed events in areas of the Russian Federation east of 100° E with elements of the Far East Military District, the Russian strategic aviation in the RFE, the Russian Pacific Fleet, and the Kamchatka peninsula.”<sup>23</sup>

Although the foresight shown by both commands in negotiating these agreements is commendable, with the sole exception of section 11a most of the sections appear are focused on lower order conflicts. Little if any attention appears to be on major wars, especially with regard to Mongolia, to Russia, and even more importantly with North Korea. Also, since USEUCOM and USPACOM have not established a prior record of working together in the past, unlike the USEUCOM-USCENTCOM multi-year cooperation with Operation Northern Watch, it would appear to be highly unlikely that a formal liaison relationship either exists already or could be created very quickly. These faults could significantly hinder a rapid U.S. response should a future conflict arise along China’s lengthy northern boundary with Mongolia, Russia, and North Korea.

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

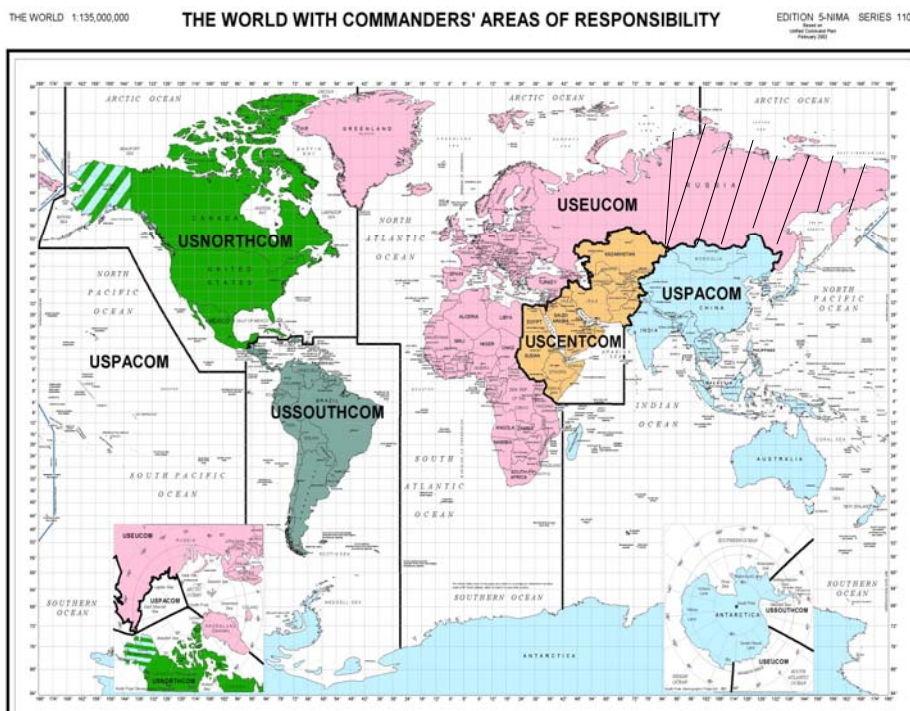
<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Memorandum of Agreement Between Director for Strategic Planning and Policy U.S. Pacific Command and Director, Strategic Plans and Policy U.S. European Command for Security Cooperation Activities with the Russian Federation*, 1.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that seam frictions could not interfere with U.S. military planning, crisis response, or major operations, several important changes should be considered. First and foremost, a National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) should cede Siberia east of 90 degrees longitude to USPACOM (see Appendix A). Map 4 shows this division. Second, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff should issue specific instructions in the form of a CJCSI to USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM to establish and coordinate liaison offices in Hawaii to plan for various contingencies that might take place along China's borders (see Appendix B). Finally, both documents should clearly define the administrative responsibilities between the USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM staffs should a conflict arise along this long and contentious border.



**Map 4: USEUCOM Ceding Administrative Control to USPACOM East of 90 Degrees**

USEUCOM and USPACOM administrative relations east of 90 degrees longitude are too amorphous; if a conflict were to arise there would be little or no time available to put specific agreements into effect. In the meantime, such an administrative division leaves a virtual “blind spot” in the coverage area of these two combatant commands, making it more likely that neither organization will seek to take responsibility over events in this AOR. This half-measure potentially opens a critical vulnerability that either China or Russia might seek to exploit at some point in the future. Ceding this AOR outright might upset the Russian government, since it might appear to imply that this territory is rightfully China’s, but this decision would allow USPACOM to take sole authority over this contentious area.

As shown during OIF, seam tensions are real, and can produce real effects. After USPACOM takes responsibility for Russia east of 90 degrees longitude, then USCENTCOM and USPACOM could more easily coordinate their own efforts. The first initiative would be to set up liaison offices in Hawaii to keep each other informed on future events along the Sino-Kazakhstan border. This would include movement of terrorists across the porous border, trafficking of weapons and drugs, and clashes over undefined sections of the mutual border. Most importantly, should a Sino-U.S. conflict erupt in the east, especially in the Taiwan Strait, then appropriate military action could be taken from USCENTCOM into Western China. Such decisions must be coordinated at the highest levels.

As the China threat becomes of greater concern to U.S. policymakers and DOD strategists, the Joint Staff should become the prime coordinating body to oversee U.S. military policy toward China. The threat of a major East Asian war is simply too big to be left to USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM. Therefore, special instructions should be issued well in advance detailing administrative responsibilities between the USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM during any Sino-U.S. conflict.

## CONCLUSIONS

For centuries, the Chinese have upheld a simple security strategy known as *Wu Yue Bu Shou* or “Use Barbarians to control Barbarians.” During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese diplomats often attempted to play foreign rivals off each other to China’s advantage, including Tsarist Russia, Great Britain, and Japan. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this triangular relationship focused instead on the Soviet Union, the United States, and Japan.

Before 2002, Russia was not assigned to a particular combatant command, but was handled directly by the Pentagon. However, on 17 April 2002, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld briefed the *Unified Command Plan*, stating that USEUCOM would be responsible for Russia: “Previously, Russia was not assigned and most efforts with Russia were handled out of the Pentagon. Russia's new status will give them the best of both worlds; they will have a command close by geographically that can deal with our military-to-military relationship on a daily basis and still maintain the dialogue with Washington. This change allows for more cooperation and coordination between our militaries. I also think it is one more signal that our post-Cold War relationship is improving. I should also note that Pacific Command will assist EUCOM in work issues with Russia that deal with their Far East Military District.”<sup>24</sup>

According to the *Unified Command Plan*, “on 1 October 2002, USEUCOM’s AOR will be expanded to include the Russian Federation.”<sup>25</sup> Perhaps unknowingly, the DOD’s creation of three combatant commands—USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM—all ranged to the PRC’s west, north, and east has potentially recreated along China’s borders a

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<sup>24</sup> Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, *Special briefing on the 2002 Unified Command Plan*, 17 April 2002 ([http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2002/t04172002\\_t0417sd.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2002/t04172002_t0417sd.html))

very similar triangular relationship as during the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Britain, Russia, and Japan struggled to dominate China, or to the Soviet-US-Japanese triangular relationship of the Cold War years.

Unless DOD policymakers exercise extreme care, this triangular administrative structure may allow Chinese leaders to make use of seam tensions between USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM to play the various combatant commanders against each other to China's ultimate advantage. Even if such a tactic were to prove unlikely, the ever-present seam frictions between these three combatant commands may make it more difficult for rapid and full communications to occur, as well as interfering with timely decision-making on the part of the combatant commands.

For these reasons, this paper has suggested common-sensical administrative reforms that will help to correct a potential critical vulnerability. Such reforms can easily be carried out by issuing a National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) revising the *Unified Command Plan* (Appendix A) and through the use of a brief CJCSI outlining administrative relations between the combatant commands (see Appendix B). As recent experiences in OIF have shown, seam tensions can have an all too real impact on the administrative duties of combatant commands. It is imperative, therefore, that such seam tensions along the borders of China be identified, understood, and corrected *before* they are allowed to have a negative impact on U.S. policy in the region.

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<sup>25</sup> *Unified Command Plan* (Naval War College: Joint Military Operations Department Reprint, 30 April 2002), 7.

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**Appendix A**  
**National Security**  
**Presidential Directive (Draft)**

**The White House**  
**Washington**

May 18, 2004.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT

THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY  
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE  
THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE  
THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
THE SECRETARY OF ENERGY  
ADMINISTRATOR, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET  
UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE  
CHAIRMAN, COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISERS  
DIRECTOR, NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY  
CHIEF OF STAFF TO THE PRESIDENT  
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE  
DIRECTOR, FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY  
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL  
SECURITY AFFAIRS  
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR ECONOMIC POLICY  
COUNSEL TO THE PRESIDENT  
CHIEF OF STAFF AND ASSISTANT TO THE VICE PRESIDENT  
FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS  
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY  
CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE FEDERAL  
RESERVE  
CHAIRMAN, COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
CHAIRMAN, EXPORT-IMPORT BANK  
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
COMMANDANT, U.S. COAST GUARD  
ADMINISTRATOR, NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE  
ADMINISTRATION  
CHAIRMAN, NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
DIRECTOR, PEACE CORPS  
DIRECTOR, FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

DIRECTOR, NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY  
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
PRESIDENT, OVERSEAS PRIVATE INVESTMENT  
CORPORATION  
CHAIRMAN, FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
COMMISSIONER, U.S. CUSTOMS SERVICE  
ADMINISTRATOR, DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION  
PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY BOARD  
ARCHIVIST OF THE UNITED STATES  
DIRECTOR, INFORMATION SECURITY OVERSIGHT OFFICE

**SUBJECT: Revisions to the Unified Command Plan**

This document is the most recent of approximately twenty National Security Presidential Directives, which have replaced both Presidential Decision Directives and Presidential Review Directives as an instrument for communicating presidential decisions about the national security policies of the United States.

National security of the United States of America includes a proper understanding and respect for many other geographic regions in the world. Understanding the importance to both U.S. and Asian security posed by the military forces of the People's Republic of China (PRC), I have determined that USEUCOM should cede to USPACOM control over its former Russian AOR east of 90 degrees longitude.

This change will grant USPACOM the status of supported command in this region, with USEUCOM as supporting command.

This Directive shall supersede all other existing presidential guidance pertaining to the Unified Command Plan.

[signed: George W. Bush]

cc: The Executive Clerk



**Appendix B**  
**CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT**  
**CHIEFS OF STAFF**  
**INSTRUCTION (Draft)**

J-1 CJCSI .....

DISTRIBUTION: A, J, S 16 May 2004

ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES IN USCENTCOM, USEUCOM, AND USPACOM  
AOR RESPONSIBILITIES AND JOINT LIAISON ACTIVITIES

1. Purpose. To establish policy concerning AOR responsibilities between USEUCOM and USPACOM and the creation of liaison officers between USCENTCOM and USPACOM and USEUCOM and USPACOM so as to take into consideration the possibility of future Sino-US conflict.

2. Cancellation. CJCSI ....

3. Applicability. This instruction applies to the Joint Staff, Services, USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM.

4. Policy. It is the belief of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that in line with the President's National Security Presidential Directive for USEUCOM to cede administrative control over Russian territory east of 90 degrees east longitude to USPACOM, that USPACOM will be the supported combatant command for any military conflicts either on Chinese territory or adjacent to the PRC's borders. To facilitate cooperation between the combatant commands, U.S. officers will be selected to act as liaison officers between USCENTCOM and USPACOM and USEUCOM and USPACOM, to be located in Honolulu, Hawaii, and to be responsible for all strategic and operations issues related to the PRC, Central Asia, and Eastern Siberia.

5. Definitions

To be determined

6. Responsibilities. The Joint Staff, Services, and Combatant Commanders of USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, and USPACOM shall fully undertake the requirements as established under the authority of this instruction.

7. General Guidance

To be determined

8. Summary of Changes

a. Revises both CJCSI . . .

9. Releasability. This instruction is approved for public release; distribution is unlimited. DOD components (to include the combatant commands), other federal agencies, and the public may obtain copies of this instruction through the Internet from the CJCS Directives Home CJCSI . . .

10. Effective Date. This instruction is effective upon receipt.

JOHN P. ABIZAID  
Lieutenant General, USA  
Director, Joint Staff  
CJCSI . . . .

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